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ABSTRACT

This historical account of the events to the ongoing effort of U.S. Catholic colleges and universities to arrive at a clear self-understanding addresses how and why these institutions evolved into the structures that exist today. The task of defining institutions as Catholic colleges and universities in relation to the modern world was pursued through negotiation with civic and governmental officials, the U.S. higher education community, the Roman Catholic Church, and the internal constituency of faculty, students, administration and trustees. The task these institutions faced was to adapt to the standards of U.S. higher education, meet legal demands consequent on government funding, satisfy the expectations of students, parents, faculty, and alumni, and do all this without losing their Catholic character. Catholic institutions find the role of religion in higher education and the ecclesial dimensions of theological education to be an ongoing challenge. The pluralism and diversity among student bodies adds to this challenge. Embracing the call to educate all those who are willing to be educated, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, has led to a proliferation of ethnic groups, religious faiths, and wide-ranging education backgrounds on Catholic college campuses. Catholic institutions look for the balance of being truly Catholic, and at the same time, truly universities and colleges. Appendix 1 contains a questionnaire on eligibility for New York state aid to higher education in 1968. Appendix 2 is a reply from the New York State Commissioner of Education to the President of the College of New Rochelle in response to a request for state financial aid in 1969. (EMS)

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